

As regards the *Notechis ater* of Krefft, the fact that intensive search in the type locality has failed to produce a single additional specimen suggests that this is not even a sub-species of *Notechis scutatus*, but merely an abnormality.

The examination of long series often reveals a remarkable variation in the head shields of a species.

—L. GLAUERT, W.A. Museum, Perth.

A Melanistic Kookaburra.—On November 10, 1950, after very stormy weather, Mr. Daryl Birch picked up a Kookaburra (*Dacelo gigas*) on the road near Mr. A. W. Gibbings' house in Coolup. This bird was delivered to me about 3 p.m. while still alive. It was a very dark specimen. Though very exhausted it attempted to "laugh" when handled—probably a shock reaction. It died during the night and was dissected and skinned next day.

The specimen, which is now in the Western Australian Museum, has all the underparts dark grey, tinged silver, caused by odd lighter feathers and silvery tips to some webs—all feathers having a dark base as in a normal specimen. The head, hind neck and back are silver-grey with similar markings to a normal specimen, but the dark brown line through eye appears more pronounced. Wings and tail similar to normal specimen, except the white patch on primaries, which has no green along the outer edge. It weighed 8 oz.; total length, 16½ in. Iris, dark brown; legs, greenish grey; beak, upper black, lower dirty white. Left testes, 1.31 x 0.82 cm.; vol., 0.45 ml.; right testes, 1.53 x 0.78 cm.; vol. 0.40 ml.

This bird was of great interest as Mrs. Gibbings, about June 21, 1950, had described to me a bird which was exactly like a Kookaburra, but black. On June 30 she phoned me to say the bird was around the house again. Though dinner was just served Mr. C. Young, who was staying with me, and myself decided to go over and see the strange bird. It was very quiet and easily observed at close quarters. Mrs. Gibbings' description of it was correct. It was a Kookaburra, but almost completely black. The only parts of the plumage which were normal were the blue spots on the wings, the white patch on the primaries and the upper tail feathers. The bird, which was perhaps a shade smaller than usual, appeared to have a red-brown iris.

This bird, according to Mrs. Gibbings, was usually on its own and over the next few months paid many visits to the house. It eventually mated with a bird of normal colour. There is little doubt that the specimen picked up was the same bird, as it was within the black bird's territorial limits and Mrs. Gibbings had noted that it was getting paler in colour. Also the black bird has not been seen since.

Though albinism is comparatively common in Kookaburras, melanism appears to be very rare. From the history of this specimen it would appear that it would probably have acquired normal plumage eventually.

—ANGUS ROBINSON, Coolup.